

I oppose loosening the rules designed to promote and protect diversity of media ownership. These rules were adopted to ensure that the public would receive a diverse range of viewpoints from the media, and not simply the opinions of a handful of media conglomerates.

I am strongly opposed to any new regulations that would permit continuing the current level of consolidation in US media much less furthering this tragic trend. As a consumer and thinking citizen I am appalled at the degradation in the quality and variety of media coverage since deregulation (more rightly crony capitalism) initiatives were launched under the Reagan administration. I am deeply concerned that during a period of incredible change and challenge for our democracy, the fourth estate has been disempowered and marginalized as a force for education of the electorate. On a national basis, the handful of huge media conglomerates have not only greatly reduced the total level of investigative journalism coverage and resources, the quality of that coverage and editorial courage have been progressively destroyed in a race towards the bottom line. While this may benefit the corporate shareholders, it has been tragic for the public. Successive administrations have increase!

d the level of control and manip

ulation of information provided to the public. We have had a series of tragic and illegal wars on sovereign foreign nations, killed thousands of innocents with our weapons of mass destruction, abandoned and abolished vital environmental protection initiatives, and witnessed broadside attacks on our constitution and civil rights by our own government and its corporate sponsors. The handful of major national media organizations that inform the majority of public opinion have not seriously examined, challenged or educated us on these important actions being undertaken in the name of the American people. Rather, they have been willing cheerleaders and conduits for the propaganda of government and corporate interests. To point to the raw number of media outlets and forms misses the point entirely. These issues need to be aired and openly debated in our mainstream media. The fact that there are hundreds of possible cable and satellite channels or thousands of tiny local radio a!

nd newspapers, is irrelent when

the vast majority of the national public opinion is informed and shaped by a handful of tv networks and major newspapers owned by media conglomerates. On a local basis, consolidation of the media subjugates the diversity of local interests and opinion to the power of advertising budgets wielded by large institutions. The debates over local development, utilities, environmental issues, health and welfare concerns, and education are all shaped by unified local media coverage whose ultimate allegiance will be determined, not by journalistic ethics or the public interest, but optimizing advertising revenue. Important local voices, whether political, moral, or artistic, cannot be heard in their own communities. Financial resources are controlled and profits expatriated by distant corporate owners that have no vested interest in the local community or its quality of life. If the members of the FCC believe in democracy and the importance of an independent media to the health of !

this republic, they will not cau

se it further harm by changing rules that will result in greater levels of consolidation by corporate capitalism, institutions which by nature and design will and in the interests of profit, will feed us cake when we need some meat. The significance of the decisions you make on these matters are of momentous importance to the health and safety of our nation and society. I pray that you reflect carefully on your responsibilities, that you will take them seriously, and that you will find the courage to act in the interests of the American public.

